

South County Corridor

at Westerly Library

June 4, 2003 from 6:30pm to 9:00pm

Approximately 10 residents from the South County corridor were present for the public workshop on June 4, 2003. The towns and villages represented by participants at the workshop were: Green Hill, Kingston, Narragansett, North Kingstown, and Westerly. There were also representatives of the Narragansett Town Managers office, Washington County Regional Planning Council and the Westerly Planning and Downtown Development offices.

Corridor Municipalities

- Charlestown
- Exeter
- Hopkinton
- Jamestown
- Narragansett
- New Shoreham (Block Island)
- North Kingstown
- Richmond
- South Kingstown
- Westerly

Major Roads of the Corridor

Route 138

- Large undeveloped areas
- Many golf courses on road contribute to summer traffic
- Train station located off 138 in Kingston
- Connects to 95, Newport, RI and University of Rhode Island – Kingston (URI)
- Access to village of Kingston

Route 1

- Dual use road – a community connector and commuter thru way
- Northern Section including North Kingstown connecting to Route 4 is a commuter road
- Southern Section including South Kingstown and Westerly is a connecting road for local residents
- In Charlestown, Route 1 is a scenic highway.
- Gateway for tourist into South County beaches and attractions
- Coastal road that connects communities but also is being built up with shopping and residential developments (South County Commons in South Kingstown)
- Historic and scenic road
- Used for bicycling events

Route 102

- Alternative route to Newport
- Rural villages and less commercial development
- Major intersection with Route 95 is developing rapidly
- Summer traffic from golf courses

Route 108

- Link to beaches
- Link to Block Island Ferry
- Used by tourists and URI students

Other transportation modes in the corridor

Train

- Stops in Kingston and Westerly
- Train is underutilized, especially from Westerly
- Expensive to ride train to Boston
- Good use of train to NYC via Westerly
- Train connections better to Boston/ New York than for commuters within state

RIPTA

- Park and Rides along Route 1, Rte 3 in Hopkinton and Rte 138 in Richmond
- Limited access to Westerly and outer corridor limits
- Express bus to Providence from URI

Ferry to Block Island

- Fast ferry and car ferry out of Pt. Judith

Bike trail

- Partially completed (Kingston to Peace Dale)

Air

- Transportation to Block Island via Westerly Airport – vital for islanders for emergency evacuation and professional services

Land Use Characteristics of the Corridor

- Agricultural farms characterize much of the Corridor.
- Shopping/retail and historic downtown characterize Route 1 in Westerly
- Corridor is undergoing suburbanization
- Rural land use is predominant in much of Corridor
- Corridor is described as **rural** but becoming **suburbanized** because of the **commutable distance** into Providence and southeastern Connecticut.

Using the Corridor Roads

The automobile as the transportation mode of choice was widely expressed by the residents. Residents, tourist and local students use their cars on corridor roads to go almost everywhere. A car is needed to gain access to other modes of transportation including the ferry to Block Island, trains to regional destinations and Park n' Ride lots for RIPTA buses. Some RIPTA routes are well utilized such as the URI to Providence and Express buses to Providence, but Westerly has limited public transportation options.

Route 1 has a dual-use as a commuter road in the North that connects vehicles to Routes 4, 95 and 295 and as a road used by tourists and local residents to access beaches, town centers and area attractions. Foxwoods, New London and Groton are major work destinations. Route 1 is the **universal connector** to other roads.

Positive Features of the Corridor

The positive features of the corridor that the participants felt **benefited** them are:

- Location of the corridor close to amenities including beaches, camping, open space and good schools
- Lovely coastal communities

- Enjoy driving Route 1 for its **vistas**
- Gateway to Rhode Island
- All the positive features that turn tourists into residents
- Water views
- Easy 45 minute commute to metro areas
- Access to Bay
- Planned commuter rail at Wickford Junction

Issues with the Corridor

Participants were concerned about the rapid changes occurring within the corridor; traffic that is increased by new developments and tourism; safety on local roads; and, the under-utilization of multi-modal transportation options.

Traffic/Congestion/Access Management/Safety

Concerned about the increase in traffic and traffic patterns that cause congestion, residents expressed a need to change access and issues with seasonal traffic patterns. Residents of the corridor expressed concern for **safety** of pedestrians, bicyclists and vehicles along corridor roads. Safety issues included road design, sidewalks, transit stops and signage.

Route 1

- Summer beach traffic
- Congestion at stop lights
- Too many curb cuts, including median center cuts allowing u-turns

Safety -

- Conflict between campers (large vehicles) and cars changing direction at median cuts - referred to as '**suicide turns**', traffic backs-up into high speed lane
- Lack of sidewalks for pedestrians
- Crossing Route 1 for all modes is **dangerous**
 - Pedestrians forced to cross four lanes of traffic at very large intersection from bus stop at Route 1 and Tower Hill Road
- Speed limits are not enforced
- Foggy conditions can make nighttime driving dangerous

Route 138

- Congestion from University of Rhode Island's Ryan Center events and campus traffic
- Summer traffic from area attractions (golf courses)
- Route 102 can be alternative road to Newport
- Thru traffic to Newport and Cape Cod

Route 108

- Summer beach and ferry traffic/parking
- Student and seasonal traffic to coastal communities

Land Use/Sprawl

As much as residents characterized the corridor as rural, they were concerned by the amount of growth and potential for growth along their corridor. Concerns include:

- Loss of rural character with incremental losses of open space by encroaching development
- Potential for 'big box' development due to current zoning
- Suburbanization of the area
- Development along Route 1 where there was once open space (South County Commons)

Transit Options

South County has limited options available to residents who do not have a car for transportation. There are many modes of transportation in the corridor, but a car is needed to reach most of them. Transit options include:

Train Service

- Expensive to ride for commuters (not competitive to other modes)
- Inconvenient
- Underutilized in Westerly

Bus Service

- Very limited schedule in Westerly
- Not convenient for people commuting to Connecticut for employment at Foxwoods, General Dynamics and Pfizer.
- Service should not stop at state borders. There should be cooperation between RIPTA and Connecticut DOT to expand service options.

Bike

- Grates need turning on roads
- No bike connection for Jamestown Bridge
- Need bike designations on Route 1

Signage

- Lack of directional information and poorly designed signs on Route 1 (beaches, ferries, destinations)

Issues Identified by Participants at End of Session

At the conclusion of the visioning session, participants were presented with a list of issues and asked to prioritize them. The following chart represents their priorities.

